



Annual Report

from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum and Biodiversity Advice Waikato 2008/09

Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum and Biodiversity Advice Waikato have been operating for six years. The Forum was established as a way of forging closer working relationships between management agencies and all groups working to protect and enhance biodiversity across the Waikato region. The Forum is managed by a Focus Group which assists the coordinator to plan and advance the projects of the Forum. The scope of activities includes:

- facilitating information transfer
- promoting coordinated biodiversity policy development
- promoting synergies between participants
- energising biodiversity activities by supporting existing and promoting new on-the-ground actions
- influencing decision making
- prioritising and scoping projects
- actioning national initiatives at a local level.

Acknowledgements

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum would like to acknowledge the financial support from: Environment Waikato, Department of Conservation (DOC), Thames-Coromandel District Council, Hauraki District Council, Matamata-Piako District Council, Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council, Waitomo District Council, South Waikato District Council, Rotorua District Council and Taupo District Council.

The Forum would also like to acknowledge the contribution that staff from other member organisations and groups have made to the successful operation of the Forum and Biodiversity Advice Waikato. Their contribution and expertise is highly valued.

Forum events

Two Forum meetings were held. The first Forum was held in Paeroa in November 2008. This Forum was attended by 62 people and the discussion and field trip focused on the Tarariki Reserve just north east of Paeroa. This reserve provides an ecological corridor between the Kaimai/Mamaku Range and Coromandel forests and is predominantly regenerating forest. Kereru, kaka, koromako and shining cuckoo are in the area. Kokako, stag beetle, Archey's frog and Hochstetter's frog were once present but no survey has been carried out to assess their population status. Tarariki Stream is the last potable supply of water in the area. The community has worked over the past nine years planting 14,000-15,000 trees along the Tarariki Stream. Silver Fern Farms Limited operates a meatworks near the stream and has provided funding for the planting as part of resource consents.

The second Forum was attended by 70 people and focused on developing solutions for maintaining the momentum of the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park in Hamilton city. Speakers focused on the Maori history of the area, the context of the project locally and regionally, successional framework and target ecosystems of the park, the aquatic habitat and the planned infrastructure such as walkways viewing platforms and pest proof fence.

The field trip to the park discussed the research planting, the mix of plants that have been planted already and the plans for the planting of the hillsides with kauri, tanekaha, rewarewa on the ridge crest and tawa and rimu on the hillslope. In the afternoon participants attended workshops which included funding, developing a community nursery, sustaining a community group and education and publicity. As a result of the Forum day the Friends of Waiwhakareke has been established with around 35 Friends on the list. The first working bee is scheduled for 29 August 2009.



Field trip to Tarariki Reserve.

Biodiversity Advice Waikato (BAW)

Over the past 12 months information and support was provided to approximately 320 landowners, agency staff and community groups relating to native species identification, planting of native trees, plant and animal pest management and funding sources. Site visits were also undertaken to assist with planting and pest management. Newspaper articles were provided to four local newspapers and presentations were given to five schools on biodiversity. Work was carried out for the Waikato District Council with 30 council covenants visited to record the condition of the covenants and provided the owners with information on planting and pest management. BAW also contributed to the Forum newsletters and the website.

The key contact for BAW resigned in May 2009. The Forum would like to thank Jan for the valuable contribution she made to biodiversity protection and enhancement while she worked for the service. The freephone service will continue until further notice with the Forum coordinator responding to the calls and referring enquiries to an appropriate agency.

Publicity

The Forum website was updated on a regular basis with more comprehensive funding pages supplied by Jan from Biodiversity Advice Waikato. The Forum now has a monthly column in the Waikato Times entitled 'Spotting the Species'. Over the Christmas holiday period a column ran for boaties outlining the importance of not landing on some of the islands off the coast of the Coromandel which are wildlife reserves to prevent weed and pest invasions. Both the fauna and flora maps from the 'Restoring Waikato's Indigenous Biodiversity: Ecological

Priorities and Opportunities' have been published by the Waikato Times. An article was also prepared on Wetlands for the Waikato Times to run before the World Wetlands Day fieldtrip. The Forum coordinator presented a lecture to College of Education students on biodiversity as part of an environmental education paper.

Networking

Membership of the Forum is around 340 with an additional 12 members joining since 2007/08. The Forum members have received four newsletters to inform them of biodiversity related information. The Forum continues to provide a valued link for community group members and management agencies through email dissemination of information and communication with individual members in answer to queries about biodiversity. The Forum coordinator attends the Strategic Planners Network meetings which discuss aspects of the region such as environment, health and transport.



Participants at the Paeroa Forum.

Sustainable Business Network

The Forum coordinator liaised with the Sustainable Business Network coordinator to broker relationships between members of the sustainable business network and community groups. This work is ongoing.

Local and regional council advocacy

The Forum prepared 13 LTCCP submissions and orally presented to 11 councils across the region. This submission process included submitting for ongoing financial support for the Forum and support and suggestions for biodiversity protection through the outcomes and budgets of these plans. The Forum has noticed a heightened sense of awareness of biodiversity protection in the LTCCP with councils providing for activities such as funds for community groups and planting of more native trees on council reserves.

Information on biodiversity was supplied to local council staff. The Forum also highlighted the importance of biodiversity protection through central government elections meetings and researched the main parties conservation policies to send out to Forum members to help them with voting.

Community groups

The Forum maintains a database and map of community group projects which highlights the contribution that these groups make to biodiversity protection and enhancement across the region. The data base includes 173 groups working on 180 restoration projects. This database is updated as new groups are formed. The Forum gave advice to community groups for writing award nominations.



Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park.

Tarariki Reserve

The Forum coordinator continues to follow up on the recommendations from the Forum day in November 2008 which focused on Tarariki Reserve. Representations from the community, DOC, Hauraki District Council and Environment Waikato have met and put forward some contributions for work in the Reserve. DOC has indicated its willingness to undertake a baseline assessment of the reserve for mammalian pests and report on the best options for control, priorities and cost estimates. DOC is also willing to undertake post-op monitoring to assess the residual trap catch (RTC) after control has taken place. Environment Waikato is prepared to assess the weed problem in the reserve and prioritise weed removal alongside the community involvement. Hauraki District Council has placed \$2,000 for 2009/10 and \$2,000 for the 2010/11 budget specifically for Tarariki Reserve. Funding options to carry out other work in the Reserve are being explored.

Nikau palms in Tarariki Reserve.





Pest Management workshop at the Kauaeranga Visitor Centre.

Workshops

Two workshops on Animal Pest Management and Safety in the Bush were run by the Forum and Biodiversity Advice Waikato (funded by way of a grant from DOC's Waikato Community Conservation Fund). The first workshop was held at a venue in Pirongia and attended by 25 people. The workshop covered animal related disease, traps and toxin management, native bush safety and minimum standard procedure requirements. The second workshop was held at the Kauaeranga Visitor Centre near Thames and attended by 30 people. This workshop covered the same topics as the Pirongia workshop and each had some practical activities in the bush including making a stretcher out of a ground sheet to carry an injured person to safety.

Bruce Postill leading Safety in the Bush workshop on Mt Pirongia.



Submissions

The Forum provide submissions and feedback on a variety of plans and strategies including DOC's Waikato Conservation Management Strategy, the Te Kauwhata Structure Plan, the Raglan Structure Plan, the Coastal Policy Statement, the Regional Policy Statement, Waikato River Treaty Strategy, Franklin District Council's Heritage Strategy, Taupo District Council's Our Neighbours Our Future Strategy, Environment Waikato's Aquaculture Plan change, Waipa District Council's 2050, FutureProof and Maungautari Ecological Island Trust.

Summary

In summary the Forum has heightened the public awareness of biodiversity by writing article for the media, increased the profile of biodiversity protection in local government plans and strategies, raised biodiversity as an issue in the central government election process and influenced decision making through the LTCCP process. The Forum and BAW have also provided technical advice to community groups through workshops. The Forum events are well attended and the feedback on the benefits of the Forum days is extremely positive. Follow up actions have taken place between management agencies and the community after each Forum day and the networking taking place through the Forum's communication processes and established relationships is invaluable.

Moira Cursey, Coordinator, Waikato Biodiversity Forum.